




CONNECTIONS

2010

**WRITING ACROSS THE
CURRICULUM
ESSAY CONTEST**

WINNING ESSAYS

SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2022 with funding from
North Carolina Digital Heritage Center

<https://archive.org/details/connections writi2010sout>

April 2010

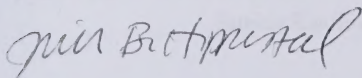
TABLE OF CONTENTS

At Southwestern Community college, our students learn that writing is an invaluable way to explore the concepts they are covering their classes. They write to learn, to investigate, to discover and to understand. In this way, they develop tools that enable them to interpret their world, becoming educated and thoughtful citizens. For our students, writing can become a lens with which to view the world – to focus on one aspect of life, to widen the horizons of learning and understanding, to look to the past and gain respect and understanding, to look to the future with humility and hope. Using this power of writing in all classes is the ultimate goal for the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program. As with any worthy goal, our students learn that writing well involves hard work and dedication. Achievement, then, requires celebration.

It is my pleasure to offer you the winning essays from the Second Annual WAC Essay Awards. Judged by a panel of instructors from across disciplines, these essays exemplify the critical thinking, original voice, and clear, yet powerful prose that combine to create excellent writing. I speak for the entire panel when I say that it was a privilege to read all the entries in this year's contest. Now that the scores have been tallied, the essays you hold are honored as the winners.

As you read, I ask you to join in our celebration of student writing.

In celebration,



Jennifer B. Hippensteel
Writing Across the Curriculum Coordinator
Southwestern Community College

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Winning Research Essays

First Place – “The Value of Change”

Jessica Beaver

Second Place – “The Manhattan Project”

Christopher Miglino

Third Place – “An Analysis of the Great Man Theory”

Christopher Bell

Winning Non-Research Essays

First Place – “A Life Devoted”

Chelsea Lantz-Cashman

Second Place – “Survival”

Laura B. Holden

Third Place – “Rules of Silence”

Patricia Kauffman

Jessica Beaver

Literature-Based Research

Dr. Norton

December 11, 2009

The Value of Change

D.H. Lawrence is renowned for drawing attention to and praising what he refers to as 'blood consciousness.' This is the awareness of the human body's most primal urges and instincts, most particularly in regards to sexuality. In "The Horse Dealer's Daughter," Lawrence tells the tale of two people who deny their biological desires and strive to conform to society's expectations, but inadvertently begin to express deep feelings of desire for one another.

Dr. Fergusson, the distant, cold, unfeeling local physician becomes helplessly enamored of Mabel, a woman who sits so far beneath him on the social ladder. He rescues her from committing suicide and in return, she saves him from continuing in his loveless existence. He wrestles with the idea of loving her. He positively repels it. He finds himself disgusted by his 'dirty' emotions and the shameless behavior associated with being so intimate with another human; yet he eventually yields to her and accepts his raw human nature, despite the pain it causes.

The woman Mabel is desperately relieved to be appreciated by someone. When Dr. Fergusson rescues her from drowning herself, she grasps to the hope that another person could care that she continues to live. Even though both Mabel and Dr. Fergusson experience a sense of sexual freedom, this story still begs the question of whether Mabel's newfound freedom is actually liberating – or simply demeaning. In an era when women were defined by the men in their lives, Mabel is driven to near-suicide while unhappily fulfilling the role of a female

stereotype. She is limited by society and Lawrence seems to suggest that her only path to liberation requires marriage to a man. It seems as though her self-worth and validation as a woman is directly related to her perceived value by men. This is a complicated question and has no definitive answer. Although the world has seen many changes, this fundamental issue remains.

Exactly how dramatically women's sexuality has changed over the course of time is best exhibited by the differences in society's attitude towards women in the past as compared to the present. In the Victorian Era – from 1837 to 1901 – the societal pressure for women to remain virtuous was extreme. A drastic example is the 'cliteridectomy' that some females would be forced to receive if thought to be masturbating. This is a procedure where the clitoris is removed. It is doubtful that any men were subjected to having part of their genitals removed for the same reason. In modern times, there is an entire industry devoted to creating masturbatory aids for women, so it is obviously much more widely accepted as a natural thing to do. The common belief during Victorian times was that women were meant to engage in conjugal acts when it was necessary for the strict and sole purpose of procreation with her husband.¹ Now women are free from societal animosity to have sex for pleasure whenever and with whomever they wish. Female birth control is widely available and affordable, making pre-marital sex for women much less of a risk than ever before (Watson).

It could be said that the availability of birth control did indeed mark the beginning of the female journey towards true sexual freedom. That journey was pioneered by the revolutionary Margaret Sanger. In 1873, Congress passed an act that prohibited the use of contraceptives as well as the spread of information regarding contraceptive methods. This act came to be known as the Comstock Laws (Congressional Digest).² Sanger single-handedly fought these laws and in

1936 achieved the legalization of female contraceptives. During this process she also secured new human rights.³ Previously, the only contraception methods that were widely used were withdrawal, also known as 'pulling out' and the condom.⁴ Neither of these could be used by women and many worried that their husbands would not accept them (Wardell). The only methods available to women were prolonged nursing (sometimes up to two years), douching and abstinence. The cervical cap was also designed during this time, but was unavailable in the United States (Poli).⁵ Prior to the legalization of contraception, it is approximated that there were two million illegal abortions every year in the United States, many of which ended fatally. It is also estimated that 25,000 women were dying while giving birth and still others were driven to suicide by their constant pregnancies (Wardell).

Although the door to women's sexual freedom was opened by birth control, the journey of female sexuality has been a rollercoaster of up and downs ever since. The memory of the first wave feminist movement of the twenties was effectively forgotten during the forties and fifties. It was not until the rebelliousness of the sixties and seventies that women developed a true sense of their collective power (Epstein). The publication of books like, "Our Bodies, Ourselves," which covers topics such as sexual stereotypes, virginity, violence against women, body image, bisexuality, orgasms, masturbation and homosexuality, all in the context of 'written by women, for women' helped to create a sense of female empowerment (Rosenbaum). Women were becoming less and less afraid to express their true feelings regarding sex. At that point, there was no way things were ever going back to the way they used to be.

This openness in female sexuality has contributed beneficially to society's attitudes towards women, but in many ways, it has also been harmful. Feminism has made it socially acceptable for women to express their sexuality; but perhaps this has caused women to become

even more sexually objectified, especially in the media. Before the feminist movement, women were either viewed by society as chaste and virginal – or as lewd and offensive. When it became ok for the average ‘nice girl’ to strive to look sexy and go after men, it also enabled the media to objectify women. This mass amount of exposure to sexualized images reinforces the idea that women are sexual objects (Dworkin and Lerum).

The result of the media influencing how society defines a sexy woman is that women start to practice self-objectification, often without realizing it. All of the books and magazines that serve as manuals on how to dress, what to say, how to apply make-up, how to style hair and even how to act all seem to have one collective purpose and that is to attract men. Is there an underlying motive – perhaps to gain sexual power over men? If this is the case, then do women truly hold the power? Is glamour liberating or does it set women up to be victims of objectification, by themselves as well as others? Either way you look at it; these are not good things to be instilling in the minds of women. Sexual power is not simply the ability to be sexy in the eyes of another person; it is also the power to be sexual (Vanwesenbeeck).

Helen Gurley Brown defines a sexy woman simply as a woman who enjoys sex. This means that a sexy woman accepts herself as a woman and everything her gender encompasses. She wrote about instructions and theories that would help women to feel sexy and be comfortable with their biological sex. However, the underlying assumption is that women want to be sexy in order to attract a man. She writes about how to flirt, how to look attractive as well as tricks to appear sexy, even if by her definition, you are not. In modern magazines such as *Cosmopolitan*, the emphasis on being sexy is very pronounced.⁶ The covers alone scream out at you from the newsstands with headlines like ‘What He Thinks During Sex,’ ‘Foreplay Men Crave,’ ‘Mind Tricks that Melt Pounds,’ ‘8 Things Guys Notice Instantly,’ ‘7 Belly-Blasting

Fricks,' 'His #1 Sex Wish,' and there's even a disclaimer on one: 'Bad Girl Issue: Sexy Bitches Only.' The impulse to read these articles and learn how to be sexy in order to gain self-esteem and attract a man can be overwhelming for some. The foundation of this sexual empowerment literature seems to rely on women validating themselves and their bodies by seeking male approval.

The reclamation of derogatory terms is a prevalent way to strip hurtful words of their power and instill them with a new definition. This is often a difficult contradiction, resulting in a word with several meanings, which are determined based on context. The use of the word 'bitches' in the Cosmopolitan headline is a good example of how this word has been reclaimed to be a joking term of endearment for women to call their friends. However, it is still possible to use the word as an insult. The word 'slut' is heading down the same path. It strikes a chord of being a sexual double standard and highlights women's sexuality as deviant. Fear of being labeled by words like this helps to control women's behavior and social standing. The reclamation of this word and others like it has inspired some women to act as 'slutty' as possible, creating an unavoidable contradiction and fulfilling the original meaning of the word, without making a valid statement. It is believed by some that "there's this power in being trashy." This new feminist way of thinking trades the victim status for 'female anger and craziness.' This type of behavior – 'appearing cheap, loud, ugly, noisy, broken, used, object and out of control,' is meant to be empowering by pushing the boundaries of acceptable feminine behavior (Attwood). It actually just pushes the boundaries of acceptable behavior in general. No one should try to be destructive and monstrous in order to prove the point that they are not in the first place. It is counter intuitive and simply does not work to instill the message that is desired. Instead, it exudes a total lack of self-respect that is not liberating, but embarrassing for women everywhere.

The rules of sexual correctness have taken women far, but the question arises of whether the etiquette of how to behave in regards to sexuality has gone too far. There has been a kind of over compensation when it comes to sexual politics. It is now accepted that verbal coercion can constitute rape. The definition of rape itself has broadened to the point that sex roles have once again become 'positively Victorian' – where men are domineering and women are passive. It is implied that sex is completely initiated by the male and the female may be ready to run away at any minute. This defensive mind-set causes some women to view themselves as 'potential survivors' (inevitable victims) and resides in the center of the feminist obsession with codes of sexual behavior. It is taught in some places that the woman must be asked every step of the way during a sexual encounter if the man's next move is ok. The problem is that feminists are actually working against their cause by victimizing women. It is thought that women are not "thriving on their hard-won independence, but are victims who cannot take care of themselves." "We're not creating a society of Angry Young Women. These are Scared Little Girls" (Crichton).

Despite many of these negative consequences of female sexual liberation, the fact that women are even allowed to write and talk about sex or even control how many babies they have is enough to make up for any harmful after-effects of the sexual revolution. The newfound sexual freedom is relatively recent. The past fifty years alone have contributed to the majority of an entirely new way of thinking and feeling for women. Any negative effects are going to take time to balance out. The truth is that sexual freedom is priceless. Female empowerment is a necessary and vital privilege that must be acquired at any cost. Ultimately, women's sexual liberation has had an overall positive effect on society and in the way that every woman feels about expressing her sexuality.

Notes

¹ A women's value during the Victorian Era was directly related to her chastity before marriage (Watson).

² The Comstock Laws were named after one man, Anthony Comstock, who devoted his life to carrying out his position as the U.S. Postal Service's 'special agent.' His mission was to ensure that no one was sending indecent contraceptive information or devices through the mail. The Comstock Laws were incorporated into the Federal Penal Code, Section 211 and reads as follows:

"Every obscene....or other publication of an indecent character and every article or thing designed, adapted, or intended for preventing conception or producing abortion or for any indecent or immoral use and every article, instrument, substance, drug, medicine or thing which is advertised or described in a manner calculated to lead another to use or apply it for preventing conception or producing abortion or for any indecent or immoral purpose and every written or printed card, letter, circular, book, pamphlet, advertisement or notice of any kind giving information directly or indirectly where or how or from whom or by what means any of the hereinbefore mentioned matters, articles or things may be obtained or made or where or by whom any act or operation of any kind for the procuring or producing of abortion will be done or performed or how or by what means conception may be prevented or abortion produced whether sealed or unsealed and every letter, packet or package or other mail matter containing any filthy, vile or indecent thing, device or substance and every paper, writing, advertisement or representation that any article, instrument, substance, drug, medicine or thing may or can be used or applied for preventing conception or producing abortion or for any indecent or immoral purpose and every description calculated to induce or incite a person to so use or apply any such article, instrument, substance, drug, medicine or thing is hereby declared to be a non-mailable matter and shall not be conveyed in the mails or delivered from any post office or by any letter carrier." (Congressional Digest)

³ The right of every woman to control her fertility, the right of parents to be free of the crises of unwanted pregnancy and the right of every child to be wanted (Wardell).

⁴ The condom was originally expensive due to them being made from animal skin and being imported from England. However, the development of vulcanized rubber in the 1850s contributed greatly to their price drop (Poli).

⁵. The cervical cap was designed by a German gynecologist who noticed that farm families were having only two or three kids because midwives were putting a block of wood over the cervix of women (Poli).

⁶. Helen Gurley Brown wrote "Sex and the New Single Girl" and later was the creator of Cosmopolitan magazine. This is a testament to how much society has changed in the last forty years in its perception of women's sexuality.

Works Cited

- Attwood, Feona. "Sluts and Riot Grrrls: Female Identity and Sexual Agency." Journal of Gender Studies 16.3 (2007-11): 233-244.
- Brown, Helen Gurley. Sex and the New Single Girl. United States: Bernard Geis Associates, 1970. 71-94.
- Crichton, Sarah. "Sexual Correctness: Has It Gone Too Far?" Newsweek 25 Oct. 1993: 52-56.
- Dworkin, Shari L. and Kari Lerum. "Bad Girls Rule: An Interdisciplinary Feminist Commentary on the Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls." Journal of Sex Research 46.4 (2009-08): 250-260.
- Epstein, Barbara. "The Successes and Failures of Feminism." Journal of Women's History 14.2 (2002-07): 118-125.
- Lawrence, D.H. "The Horse Dealer's Daughter." Literature: An Introduction to Reading and Writing 7th Edition. Eds. Edgar V. Roberts and Henry E. Jacobs. Upper Saddle River: Prentice, 2004. 478-489.
- Poli, Amanda. "Birth Control."
<http://www.cwrl.utexas.edu/~ulrich/femhist/birth_control.shtml>
- Rosenbaum, Lynn, et al. "Sexuality." Our Bodies, Ourselves. United States: Simon and Schuster, 1984.
- Vanwesenbeeck, Ine. "The Risks and Rights of Sexualization: An Appreciative Commentary on Lerum and Dworkin's Bad Girls Rule." Journal of Sex Research 46.4 (2009-08): 268-270.
- Wardell, Dorothy. "Margaret Sanger: Birth Control's Successful Revolutionary." American Journal of Public Health 70.7 (1980-07): 736-742.

Watson, Joanna. "Women's Sexuality: Then and Now."

<<http://www.cwrl.utexas.edu/~ulrich/femhist/sexuality.shtml>>

"What Congress Has Done to Date About Birth Control Legislation." Congressional Digest

10.4: 100-101.

Christopher Miglino

American History II – HIS132

Jim Hippensteel

October 31, 2009

In August of 1945, America dropped two atomic bombs on the Empire of Japan, effectively ending World War II. To the populace, these bombs appeared like an early sunrise ending a bloody night. Overnight, the nuclear genie had been let out of its bottle. The process by which this was brought about involved contributions from some of the greatest minds of the time. While there is much controversy over whether the bomb should have been used and the effect it had on the future balance of world power, this should not detract from the accomplishment of its creation. The first use of atomic power was an amazing human advancement. The chronology of this extraordinary scientific advancement and the methods used by some of its contributors shall herein be examined.

The creation of the first atomic bomb began long before World War II. In fact, the theory that led this research was devised prior to World War I. In 1905 Albert Einstein published his much acclaimed Theory of Relativity which postulated that matter and energy could be interchanged, and that large quantities of energy could be released through the manipulation of atomic particles, namely the fission of atomic nuclei. Continuing this line of inquiry was Enrico Fermi who, in 1934, created the first experimental fission reaction. Fermi used neutrons to split atomic nuclei. His method would later be used as the trigger for the first atomic bomb (Pearson, 2009).

When Hitler and Mussolini began their rises to power both Einstein and Fermi escaped to the US. Aware of the Nazis efforts to create atomic weaponry, Einstein wrote a letter to President

Roosevelt in 1939. Therein, he warned the president of the impending German threat and advised researching the atomic process. Roosevelt responded by forming the Advisory Committee on Uranium (Manhattan, 2009).

A great deal of research went into the selection of raw material for the atomic bomb. Investigations into the fissionability of uranium yielded the knowledge that the lighter isotope, uranium-235 was preferable for the process. Unfortunately, the raw ore is largely uranium-238. The fissionable uranium-235 is present only in extremely small quantities. As these elements are isotopes, that is, they vary only in their numbers of neutrons, they cannot be separated by any chemical extraction processes. They have to be separated mechanically (Bellis, *par.2*).

Under the umbrella of the Office of Scientific Research and Army Corps of Engineers, under the direction of General Leslie Groves, various sites were considered for research and eventual refinement of uranium-235, a process commonly referred to as enrichment. Procedures were developed at Columbia University in New York, UC Berkley in California, and the Metallurgic Research Laboratory (Met Lab) in Chicago. A plant was constructed in Clinton, TN to implement the various processes and produce a usable quantity of uranium-235. The plant and the surrounding staff housing area were later renamed, Oakridge (Groves, Leslie, 35) .

The last theoretical step before mechanical construction of a detonation device could proceed was the actual fission process itself. Fortunately, Enrico Fermi was affiliated with the laboratory in Chicago. Based on his previous work, he developed a successful, controllable, and sustainable nuclear fission chain reaction. (Pearson, 2009) It is the cascade of particle fission, or chain reaction, that yields such great energy output. During the process of developing sustainable fission, a new element was discovered. Plutonium-240 is produced by the slow fission of uranium-238. A transitory element is produced that rapidly decays into the highly fissionable

plutonium. This discovery was made in 1941 at Met Lab, Chicago by Glen Seaborg. (Manhattan, 2009) It was later shown that plutonium is more readily fissionable than uranium-235. Work continued along both avenues of research.

General Groves then assumed command of the Manhattan Engineer Group (MED). This group was tasked with developing a delivery and firing mechanism for the fission reaction. In other words, they were to build the atomic bomb. A site central to the research locations was chosen for this project, Los Alamos, NM. While the whole of the Manhattan Project included all of the sites and the administrative offices, it is this site that is most commonly associated with the project. General Groves placed Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer in charge of the bomb engineering site at Los Alamos.

There was great controversy over the wisdom of Groves' decision. Although Dr. Oppenheimer was already engaged in high level aspects of the project, the Army refused to grant his security clearance (Groves, Leslie, 37). There were concerns over the Communist party affiliations of some members of his family. It was at the insistence of and under orders by the general that Oppenheimer was eventually approved to lead the project.

Due to the availability of two fissionable materials, uranium-235 and plutonium-240, there were two different bombs constructed. The names have been popularized such that "Fat Man" and "Little Boy" are nearly household names. However, far more work went into the creation of these weapons than is commonly known.

The engineers at MED Los Alamos has a great many ideas of how to construct what came to be known as "the Gadget" (Manhattan, 2009). The first design was to accommodate uranium-235. The basic concept was to fire a uranium bullet down a barrel into another uranium target. The combined masses would reach a critical stage and begin shedding neutrons. The

explosive threshold would be reached long before full material fission occurred, but the output was deemed sufficient due to the relatively slow neutron cascade of uranium-235. (Manhattan, 2009) This bomb was named “Little Boy”. The design was so sure to work that no test was performed. Also, the scarcity of uranium-235 and the instability of the triggering mechanism made a pre-test undesirable.

The second bomb, “Fat Man”, was built to accommodate plutonium. As previously stated, plutonium is created during a uranium-238 chain reaction. While uranium-238 is insufficient to produce weapon-grade fissionability, the neutron cascade could trigger the formation of plutonium. As proven at the National Academy of Sciences, plutonium-240 is far more reactive than uranium-235 (Pearson, 2009) .

Originally, the same design was to be used. The gun-barrel plutonium bomb would have been called “Thin Man”. However, the higher degree of reactivity would have caused the combined sub-critical masses to reach a critical state before the chain reaction had proceeded to an acceptable level. The “Thin Man” design had to be scrapped (Manhattan, 2009).

Fortunately, there were several design ideas. The one that produced the most feasible result was found by Seth Neddermeyer, who supposedly came up with the bomb implosion design while squeezing an orange (Laucht, 45). The implosion bomb compresses a sub-critical core of plutonium-240 with inward oriented explosives. The compacted core then reaches a critical state and begins to release neutrons. The neutron then continues on to trigger the necessary chain reaction.

This is the design that was used in the Trinity test on July 16, 1945; it was the first successful test of a nuclear weapon (Manhattan, 2009). When the plutonium model bomb was detonated at the White Sands Proving Ground outside Socorro, New Mexico, a monumental fire

ball and a blinding flash of light could be seen. J. Robert Oppenheimer is said to have quoted the Bhagavad gita in saying, "I am become Death. The destroyer of worlds." (Manhattan, 2009)

On August 6, 1945 "Little Boy" was dropped on Hiroshima by the bomber crew of the Enola Gay. 66,000 people were killed instantly and 69,000 more were severely injured (Manhattan, 2009). A one-half mile radius from the blast site was completely vaporized with severe to total destruction spreading out up to two miles. (Manhattan, 2009) Three days later, on August 9, a second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. Despite having been dropped over a mile and a half off course, "Fat Man" leveled half the city and killed or injured over 64,000 people. The next day, Japan surrendered. A horrific war was brought to a horrific conclusion. Over a hundred thousand lives were lost in the initial detonations with another hundred thousand dying from radiation, exposure, and malnutrition shortly thereafter.

The responsibility that the creators of the atomic bomb bear for its use is another philosophical point much debated in the scientific community. Does responsibility rest with the designer or the user? The destructive capability of their advancements were clear to the creators of the bomb. A report entitled the Prospectus on Nucleonics, commonly called the Jefferies Report was issued by the scientists at Met Lab in July 1944, a year before the use of the bomb. (Manhattan, 2009) Therein, the scientists warned against using nuclear technology as instrument of war and urged the government to pursue peaceful uses of the energy. Whether or not that report should have been heeded is a topic for another time.

Regardless, the accomplishments of the scientists and engineers who worked on the Manhattan Project is astounding. Their accomplishments undoubtedly ended World War II sooner than would have been possible without them. Furthermore, their contributions to the

advancement of nuclear science cannot be denied. The Manhattan Project is truly one of the most important joint scientific ventures of our time.

Works Cited

Bellis, Mary. "History of the Atomic Bomb and the Manhattan Project" About.com. Oct

2009. http://inventors.about.com/od/astartinventions/a/atomic_bomb.htm

Groves, Leslie R. Now It Can Be Told. Harper & Row. New York. 1962.

"Groves, Szilard, and Oppenheimer." *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 48.10 (1992): 37.

Academic Search Premier. EBSCO. Web. 9 Oct. 2009.

Laucht, Christoph. "An Extraordinary Achievement of the American Way". European Journal

of American Culture. Vol. 28 number 1 Intellect Ltd. 2009

"Manhattan Project Chronology". Atomicarchive.com. 09 Oct. 2009.

<http://www.atomicarchive.com/History/mp/chronology.shtml>

Pearson, John "Chapter One: Atomic History; Building the Bomb." *Atomic Bomb* (2009): 1.

MasterFILE Premier. EBSCO. Web. 9 Oct. 2009.

An Analysis of the Great Man Theory
By: Chris Bell

A particular pattern is present as one looks upon history as a whole spanning from ancient times to the present. The pattern is such that throughout history, a series of great men have arisen out of the multitudes to influence the world they lived in such a way that the course of history was altered. The Great Man Theory has been offered to account for the uniqueness of these leaders. I will discuss the Great Man Theory in comparison to opposing viewpoints and later apply it to certain important figures in history such as Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, and Charlemagne.

The Great Man Theory is often identified with the 19th Century writer, Thomas Carlyle. The theory basically states that:

“The most significant contribution to any society is made by outstanding individuals. It is such great men, rather than circumstances or broad social or historical movement, who are responsible for progress.” (Lippencot).

According to this theory, notable figures in history, such as Alexander the Great, Genghis Kahn, and Charlemagne, all had characteristics that projected them to greatness among their peers. Their success is not therefore, a result of the society and influences around them. Also, the theory can be taken one step further, to deduct that should these figures not have been born, there would not have been another individual to take his place. This might seem at first to be a lot to assume, as one Herbert Spencer would argue.

Herbert Spencer was a great opponent to the Great Man Theory of Carlyle. Like others he believed that Carlyle’s so-called “Great Men” were simply products of the society and environment in which they lived. In fact he wrote this in his *Study of Sociology*:

"You must admit that the genesis of a great man depends on the long series of complex influences which has produced the race in which he appears, and the social state into which that race has slowly grown....Before he can remake his society, his society must make him." (Spencer)

The sentiments of Spencer have been accepted by the majority in the past century or so, leaving those of Carlyle to be considered backward and rather primitive. According to Spencer, it is obvious that the significance of any one man can be traced to the historical events predating his existence, as well as the political, social, and economical climate into which he is born. With this being said, there are many individuals residing within a society or historical climate, yet only a few may rise to greatness.

While certain conditions may act as the fuel, it is the innate qualities and characteristics of an individual that act as the spark, illuminating the individual in the presence of their numerous contemporaries who are left in the dark. Recent scientific research such as the Human Genome Project, have begun to support the significance of genetic traits that people are born with. A study conducted by Frances Rice and Anita Thapar of Britain's Cardiff University, suggests that anti-social behavior stems from traits inherited from the mother rather than from outside factors (Schmidd). Using this information, it is reasonable to assume that while many people are exposed to the same influences, the reactions of the people to the stimuli are as unique and numerous as the people themselves. Therefore it is not the conditions set before the individual but their response to these conditions that may lead them to greatness. History can provide several instances where this was the case.

The ancient military genius of the Macedonians, Alexander the Great, was born into the lap of luxury. Servants satisfied his every wish and he even had the opportunity to be taught by the revered Aristotle. Even the latest military tactics were being developed and utilized around him. The same was mostly true for his opponent in neighboring Persia, Darius III, as well as many of the rulers who would eventually succumb to Macedonian rule. Yet it was Alexander who tasted victory most often among these foes due to his military genius and a certain creativity and adaptability he possessed. He was a master at utilizing unknown territory and conditions to his advantage, which was useful because he fought the battles of his campaign on foreign soil. Many situations Alexander found himself arose with relatively short notice and it was during these times he persevered with these innate qualities. This is especially notable when he fought Darius III in the battle of Gaugamela in 331 B.C. Here we find the Macedonians numbering around 47,000 men, whereas the Persian force was roughly double that at 86,000 men (Devries, 83). Darius III had also chosen an open terrain which was favorable to his large numbers. Despite these disadvantages, Alexander managed to adapt to the conditions and outmaneuver the Persian force, ignoring the advice given to him by his more conservative generals (Devries, 84). The disagreement among Alexander and his generals is an excellent example of several men who had all been trained in roughly similar tactics and in the same society, yet Alexander's unique response to the given situation proved to be the key to winning the battle.

Another Historical example comes from the East. The Mongols to the north of China had lived a nomadic life on the steppes since prehistoric times (Group). For centuries, their social structure had consisted of rivaling tribes or clans ruled by

chieftains. This structure was bridled in 1206 A.D. by a Mongol named Temuchin, who after avenging his father's death at the hands of a rival clan, began absorbing others into his control and became known as Genghis Kahn (Group). He went on to carve out the greatest land empire known to man which encompassed most of Asia and threatened to plunge into Europe. The most notable evidence supporting the Great Man Theory is the fact that this man came from a minor clan in a nomadic society and through his own ambitions and skills, was able to unite a normally scattered people and quell the fighting amongst clans. In a sense, he altered an entire lifestyle that had predated him by centuries. If he was a true product of his society, it is unlikely that he would have sought tribal unity or have been able to maintain control over the vast amounts of people outside of his regional tribes. The Mongols were already superior horsemen by Genghis' time, yet he turned them into an organized fighting force, divided into myriads, or groups of 10,000 which were then subdivided, enabling them to perform complex maneuvers. (Group) He also made great advancements by embracing trade and incorporating the genius of Chinese engineers, which all were actions that represented his natural foresight and ingenuity.

The third example rests on the shoulders of Charlemagne, who is regarded today as the "Father of Europe". Charlemagne rose to power in 768 A.D. as the second ruler of the Carolingian dynasty, succeeding his father, Pepin the Short (Jones). Even though Charlemagne entered the throne with the support of the Pope, and a member of the nobility, Europe was still largely in disarray from the fall of the Roman Empire and controlling it would be a prodigious task. During such a tumultuous time, Charlemagne had to use his natural abilities and aspirations to form his (and Europe's) destiny.

Charlemagne's military success was partly due to the fact that he spoke the language of ferocity that had been known in Europe for centuries yet maintained the Pope's support, giving him a double edged sword in his conquests. As he proceeded to subjugate the pagan people in the name of God, Charlemagne also made other cultural advancements that showed incredible foresight. He was determined to spread literacy throughout his domain even though at the time he couldn't read himself (although he later learned) (Jones). He even supported this goal with the founding of libraries, which shows a departure from the world in which he was raised and a return to some of the ideals held by Roman society. Increased building of churches and other structures was also a trademark of Charlemagne's era and once again shows how this militaristic man was also capable of thinking ahead towards other advancements, unlike many of his predecessors. In the nearly three hundred years since the fall of the Western Roman Empire, no one had stepped forward from the Germanic people like Charlemagne. As he did, he set into motion bright changes born of his own ambition that helped Europe limp through the Early Middle Ages.

While the debate continues regarding The Great Man Theory of Carlyle, I have provided an analysis of the theory in comparison to opposing viewpoints as well as several historical examples where this theory seems to be upheld. There is virtually no argument however that these men were truly significant leaders of our past and their actions have affected the course of history. As we live in our modern era, one can only guess as to where and how the next great man will emerge.

Works Cited

- Lippencot, B.E. *Victorian Critics of Democracy*. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota, 1938. Print.
- Spencer, Herbert. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. 2008. Web. 15 Nov. 2009.
- Schmid, Randolph E. Discovery. 2009. Web. 17 Nov. 2009.
- Devries, Kelly. *Battles of the Ancient World*. New York: Barnes&Noble , 2007. Print.
- Group, The Applied History Research. "Genghis Kahn". The University of Calgary. 2000. Web. 19 Nov. 2009.
- Jones, Joseph Z.T. "Charlemagne: King of the Franks". Vanderbilt University. Web. 26 Nov. 2009.

Chelsea Lantz-Cashman
 Mythology, 8/27/2009
 Journal Assignment 1

A Life Devoted

"Music is the last true voice of the human spirit. It can go beyond language, beyond age, and beyond color... straight into the heart and mind of all people." – Ben Harper

Somewhere amid the tales of my youth, hidden among the numerous stories of childhood obstinance, sibling rivalry, and epic outdoor escapades, there lurks my beginning. My genesis was merely a preamble to the actual contractions and placental mess, though it did involve a birthing: the birth of an idea – my name.

The story of my name begins with a car ride. During most of her pregnancy, my mother continued to work, thus every morning she navigated the narrow roads of rural Pennsylvania to the local hospital. My presence was evident in the unwavering nausea and the bluntly protruding orb fastened to her slim figure, a bulbous pre-human called "Laura Beth." "Laura Beth" was rather uninventive coming from two bi-products of the sixties era, a little too generic for pseudo flower children, as my parents were. With "Laura Beth" as an introduction, one is fated to a childhood among other two-named children, a clique laden with southern propriety and genteel behavior, perhaps even plaid jumpers. However, this particular morning, I dodged my preordained life as "Laura Beth" thanks to the impeccable timing of an anonymous radio personality.

After the morning weather report and local news, said anonymous DJ opted for the melodious vocals of the folk goddess, Joni Mitchell. As my mother passed another pasture, another silo, the lyrics of *Chelsea Morning* permeated the dröll task of driving: "*Woke up it was a Chelsea Morning and the first thing that I heard...*" Perhaps it was the up-beat cadence or a deep pressure stemming from my fetal-self, but *Chelsea Morning* lingered with my mother for

the remainder of the day. When she returned home that evening, my father was instantly called to conference. After some heavy deliberation, as my name would set a broad guideline for my future self, “Laura Beth” was replaced with the name I herald today: Chelsea Dawn.

The music that spawned my name resonated throughout my youth. Mitchell’s light harmonies flitted about the kitchen on Saturday mornings and echoed into the garden during hazy wagon rides at dusk. However, night time was monopolized by my adamant demands for *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*. A few years later, Joni and Rudolph would be replaced with *Journey* and air guitar solos alongside my father.

As Chelsea Dawn, my utter devotion to music was fated; rhythm and melody were engrained in my being. Although, it took a few years of high school to jump-start a mere love of music into a passion. My sophomore year, I spent most my time at Greenville’s local art school, The Fine Arts Center, honing my creative writing skills. The Fine Arts Center not only fostered my budding creativity, but offered an environment of shared artistic values; a coop between all genres of the arts. While I nurtured a romance with the written word, jazz guitar drifted through the open windows, enticing my musical curiosity. The wafting snip-its of *So What* and *Straight No Chaser*, left only a deep yen for more and ultimately sparked a raging obsession.

Soon birthdays, allowances, Christmas and any other opportunity for gifts or money were filtered into building a diverse jazz library. The foundation consisted of the standards: Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Thelonius Monk and Charlie Parker. The standards became repetitive, so I opted for the obscure, which led to Charles Mingus, Eric Dolphy and Cecil Taylor. The obscure music of Ornette Coleman, Benevento Russo Duo and others joined a vast catalog. Jazz mania seeped into every aspect of my life; my best friend once threw a

into odes proclaiming overwhelming adoration; my room – a homage to the jazz legends of today and yesterday.

My lust for jazz would soon be threatened by the renewal of a long-term infatuation. With the transition to college, my love for words was rekindled. Music would remain my soul, but my heart was devoted passionately to words. With the zeal I dedicated to jazz, I leapt into my studies: words fueled my existence. The intensity of creation, of manipulating words was simply intoxicating. I consumed all literature, for I was reading with a purpose: I believed that anything I needed to know about writing could be found in pages already published. I declared a major of Creative Writing and began a strict regiment of daily journaling, long hours of staring into a blank computer screen and editing, so much editing. Those long nights of constipated creativity were dulled only by soft drags from Miles' horn.

The demands of scholarships, professors and my own rigid routine soon took their toll: my intensity waned and I lost focus. College was put on hold for a journey into the world of the working. After some geographical shuffling, I adopted Asheville as my home. Asheville was a packaged deal, offering, not only a job and my father, but an impressively diverse music scene.

Almost instantaneously, the blur of college eased and music reclaimed my heart. If I wasn't shelving books at the local Books-A-Million, I was practicing the fundamentals of jazz piano or attending a drum circle down town. I joined bands as a visiting keyboardist, lost myself in the phenomena of the *Grateful Dead* and then boasted of my allegiance to homespun bluegrass. A whirlwind of succinctly planned sound enveloped my daily existence. Ultimately, the delicious chaos of Asheville led to the present.

With a few ~~coining~~ words from my brother, I uprooted myself once again and embraced the opportunity of outdoor adventure, deep within the Nantahala Gorge. Technically, my

adventure turned out to be contentment. Today, my life is no more than long nights filled with laughter and days abundant with stark colors beaming out of the river. Music resounds everywhere: my boyfriend plucking at the guitar as I fall asleep, a gathering on Miles' birthday to show our great appreciation, a purple night interrupted by swallowed thuds from the bongo.

Though I'm only twenty-five, I feel as though I've completed the first full cycle of my musical evolution. I now coexist with music. I know there is no action that does not create the possibility for beautiful sound and no song is ugly, only different. My frantic obsessing to know all and know now has been replaced with peace. I reconciled my two passions and now practice a balance between writing and music. I find solace in the fact that there is more to come and more will be wonderfully enlightening. By no means do I believe the process is over, but I feel as though *Chelsea Dawn's* first chapter is complete. And I am overwhelmed with gratitude that *Chelsea Morning* lingers to illuminate the future.

Survival by Laura Holden

I am a breast cancer survivor. This is a brief account of my story.

On September 7, 2005, an avalanche of events forever altered the landscape of my life. In the midst of the terror, misery, and pain, I would find depths of love that humbled me. I would find faith renewed and strengthened. I would feel the hand of God and know that he and his angels walk amongst us every day. I found a blessing.

On the morning of the 7th, I was brushing my teeth. The pull of the skin of my left breast looked odd, different. After further examination, I discovered there was a knot that I had never noticed. I showed my husband, Neil, and we agreed that I needed to see my doctor.

The previous spring I had started a new job with a law firm. My boss had promised medical and retirement benefits. Two weeks before I noticed the knot, the insurance company had approved the policy, and I had full medical coverage. The blessings and miracles had begun unnoticed by me.

I made an appointment with my internist. I have never been scared to go to the doctor but I was terrified this time. Neil and I showed up at the doctor's office, and waited our turn. The doctor examined the knot, and she told me she thought it was nothing more than fibroid cystic disease, which is common in women. But just to be on the safe side, she wanted to send me for a mammogram. She assured me that she thought everything would be fine since I did not have a family history of breast cancer or any of the other warning markers to warrant concern.

A few days later, my husband and I waited at the Women's Center at Harris Regional Hospital. The radiographer called me back and gave me a little cotton shawl to

put on. I was taken into a room where the big mammography machine, or breast press, stood and I intently listened to what was to transpire. As she mashed my breast with the cold vise-like clamps, I said a prayer. She took a couple of different x-rays then sent me to the waiting area. I sat with other women in the cold sterile waiting area in the cotton shawl that left little for the imagination. No one talked or made eye contact. It was as if by talking some unimaginable curse would befall everyone there. Anxiety amplified the silence, and I wondered if any of us were breathing. Thirty minutes later, the radiographer returned and informed me that she needed to take some magnified images. I learned that additional tests equates to bad news. After reviewing the additional images, I was then whisked off to the ultrasound department. I will never forget the antiseptic smell or feel of the cold gel that was smeared on my breast. After the ultrasound was completed, the radiologist came in the room and asked me, "Are you a trustworthy person?" I had no idea what this had to do with what had transpired, but I responded "Yes." He then informed that I needed to make an appointment with a surgeon and soon. He showed me the x-ray and pointed to an area that had him concerned. It all looked like white spider-webs inside the outline of a breast, my breast. As I left the Women's Center, I realized I had been in there for two hours. I knew Neil had to be worried to death.

A week later, I met with Dr. Simms. He explained that a biopsy needed to be performed. We reviewed the area of concern in the x-rays, and he stated that there was a calcium buildup. Calcium sometimes surrounds a tumor. He believed all to be benign though. On October 4, 2005, a biopsy was performed. The cold of the icy slab seeped into my body as a long needle was inserted into my breast. I tried to keep my body from

shaking. I was not sure whether I was trembling from fear or the cold temperature in the room.

Two days later, Dr. Simms explained the results of the test. I heard him say, "You have cancer." I stopped listening. Images raced through my mind: my children, Christopher and Conner, without a mother, my husband without a wife, and my parents without a daughter. To me, cancer was a death sentence. I fell apart mentally. Thankfully, Dr. Simms wrote all the information down to review later. He believed my cancer to be Ductal Carcinoma in Situ, which meant that it had not spread outside the milk duct. Dr. Simms recommended going to Asheville to meet with a cancer surgeon.

Two days after my thirty-fourth birthday, I made my way to Mission hospital with Neil and my mother, Gail. I remember checking in and feeling how impersonal this whole process was. No one cared that I had came in with all my body parts and would be leaving without one of them. I was a nervous wreck. Our first stop that morning was the radiology department, where they injected the radioactive dye into my breast. I laid there under a large looming machine and started to cry. The radiologist noticed, and she went to retrieve my husband. He stood beside me and held my hand while they were completing the scan.

We found that laughter will come to you during moments of anxiety when you least expect it. As Neil, my mother, and I sat in the surgical waiting room, a nurse appeared, and called my husband back. My mother and I just sat there like nothing out of the ordinary was transpiring. A few minutes later, Neil and the nurse returned and both were laughing. She had taken him back to the prep room, gave him the gown, instructed

him to undress, and told him she would bring his family back to be with him in a few minutes. Heart broke and terrified, he tried to understand why they would want him in the operation room while they butchered his wife. In the confusion of a busy hospital, coupled with the early morning hour, the nurse thought they would be operating on him. He quickly backed out of the room and told her she had the wrong person. I know Neil would have taken my place and told me so many, many times. But this was the path that I must travel.

I returned home with a scared and sunken crater where my breast had been. A drain was stitched to the disfigured flap to removed fluid my body pumped into the breast-less void. The drain was to remain in for ten days. I went back to see my surgeon ten days later for the removal of the drain and to get the results from the surgery. I sat in one of his exam rooms and listened to him tell me that it was worse than we originally thought. He had removed the tumor and three lymph nodes and the cancer had spread to one of the lymph nodes. Another surgery would be needed to remove the other lymph nodes. An oncologist would tell me what further steps would need to be taken to save my life.

We met with my oncologist, Dr. Michael Messino, a week before the surgery to remove my lymph nodes. On approximately seven feet of exam table paper, the short, mustached Italian wrote out all of our options. He included diagrams and names of toxins or chemotherapy that I had never even heard of. In the midst of all this information, there was one question that I had to ask: "Will I be able to have another child once everything is finished?" My husband and I had only been married five months, and I dreamed of sharing a child with him. The answer he gave me was one I

did not want to hear. He told me if I wanted to have a child that I would need to harvest my eggs. We put it in God's hands and proceeded with the chemotherapy.

On January 6, 2006, I sat in a blue recliner and prepared for my first treatment. I signed a stack of documents that gave them permission to infuse toxic chemicals into my bloodstream to kill any remaining cancer cells. I was told that the chemotherapy had a cumulative effect and would become harder each time for my body to recover.

The chemo nurse had informed me that by my second treatment, I would lose my hair. The Saturday after my second treatment my hair started falling out in handfuls. I panicked. Neil was so calm. He told me that I could shave his head and then he would shave mine. This was my way of taking control. I would take my hair, not the cancer. My mother cried the first time she saw me without hair.

I celebrated finishing my dose dense chemotherapy regimen by going to a Rascal Flatts concert in Greenville, SC with Neil and my niece, Crystal. Our tickets were on the floor about 30 rows from the stage. We were beside the sound boards. In the middle of their set, cables were lowered from the ceiling, attached to a part of the stage, and then Rascal Flatts was flying over the crowd. The flying stage was docked at the sound board and all the fans surrounded the makeshift stage. Neil and I were pushed to the front by a couple that was sitting behind us. The band continued playing and then they started singing the song "Skin". "Skin" is about a girl with cancer who has lost all her hair. Gary LeVox, the lead singer, looked over the side of the stage and saw me in my scarf. He made his way down the steps of the stage and took my hand and led me up on the stage. As he sang the song to me, I removed my scarf, allowing my bald head, my badge

of courage to shine, and 16,000 fans erupted into applause. Weak in the knees, I asked Gary to get my husband. Taking two steps at a time, my husband, my rock, my constant companion through all the pain and terror, the tears and nausea, wrapped his arms around me and we danced as if no one else was in the room. Miracles happen, and God exists. After the concert, we were stopped numerous times and asked if that had all been staged. Through the tears of joy and humility, we said it was, but not by anyone here on Earth.

I would complete a lighter regimen of chemotherapy and hormone treatment to ensure the cancer did not return. Life began to return to normal. My hair came back, but it was snow white. Thank God for Clairol. You never stop worrying though and one morning, after noticing several days of unusual pain in my one good boob, I expressed my concern to my husband. We cried, prayed, and called the doctors who were now loved like the dearest of family members. "Come in; we just need to check" they said.

The Saturday before I was to go in for a new round of tests, I mentioned to Neil that I had been nauseous for several days. Furrowing his brow, a half smile across his face he asked "Are you pregnant?" Joy, unbelievable joy, could it be possible? Three pregnancy tests later, I was confident that we were going to have a baby.

On September 27, 2008, I gave birth to my miracle baby, William Thomas Holden. He is the egg that I did not freeze, the faith I placed in God.

The vanity plates on my minivan say, "BLSN". God has bestowed many blessings upon me and my family. During my darkest hour, he was with me and I felt his loving hands on me. I am a Survivor.

Pat Kauffman

Mr. Kyle Burkett

English 111

February 6, 2010

Rules of Silence

It was just another Saturday in July on Stanwood Road. I cleaned house in the morning, walked the ten blocks to the library, found some books and came home. It was warm and humid, would get hotter, and another thunderstorm would come in across Lake Erie that evening. I planned to join the rest of the neighborhood kids running up and down the street in my swimsuit when it rained. It was a summer Saturday in Cleveland, Ohio, "The Best Location in the Nation." and in my eleventh summer, I could ride my bike, visit any one of a number of friends on the street or sit under a maple or buckeye tree and read. It was my last innocent Saturday; by that night, the foundations of my childhood would be dust.

I was raised like many kids in the sixties: the pillars of family, school, church and community protected and insulated me. My family lived in a working class neighborhood along with twenty or so other families on the street. We were Catholic, but had Jewish and Protestant neighbors. We were Slovenian, but Italians, Germans, Irish, Russians and Greeks lived on Stanwood Road, and many of the parents, including mine, were first generation American. My dad, like many of our dads, fought Nazis in World War II and came back to work in a union shop. My mom, unlike many others, worked as a secretary, both during and after the War. We had a smallish family for Catholics, only five kids, and I was the youngest.

There were rules set and enforced by every adult I met: study hard, so you can do better than your parents have. Love and respect God, your parents and your brother. Help people who are not as fortunate as you are. Work hard; if you dig ditches make sure you dig the best ditch.

Politicians and union bosses are wrong sometimes, but your country and union are always right. You will listen to your parents, teachers and priests or suffer the consequences of the belt, the principal's office, or the flames of Hell. We all talk to each other about you: do not think you can get away with anything.

However, Saturday was a day to be out of the house, away from the grownups. From the completion of chores to setting the table for dinner stretched a long, warm afternoon and I had new books to read. I chose one and climbed up on the front porch railing, leaning against the column where I could see the street and read at the same time. A few pages in I looked up and saw a moving truck up the street. The Kosacz family had moved south of town a month before and someone was moving in. Moving trucks were an unusual sight on our street and always an occasion for kids to gather and gossip. I joined with other kids across the street at Toni Rupertino's house, leaving my book on the porch.

A black man hopped out the driver's side, but we had seen many black truck drivers. He was young and wore his hair in that style called the "Natural," all picked out and puffy. A couple of other black guys jumped from the back of the truck. Dave Rupertino, a teenager, commented that the new folks must have a lot of money to hire that many movers. We all agreed wisely with this assessment: all of our parents had moved themselves; Dad and uncles drove the truck and dropped off the furniture while Mom brought the kids and "delicate" boxes.

Our parents were beginning to gather and talk, too. They seemed angry. Their voices were lowered, and they were not looking at us children. They were looking at the men across the street. Toni's little brother Mike and I were the quietest and most ignored of the kids, so we decided to sneak around the adults and listen a little:

"...well, I thought Kosacz had better sense than to sell us all out, I guess they must have paid a pretty penny for that place..."

"...it's against the law not to sell to them..."

"...and I knew after Stokes became mayor they thought they'd be able to go anywhere..."

When Mike and I got back together, we had those and many similar, strange comments to share with the rest of the kids. Mike frowned, "I think they're mad because a black family's moving in."

I was confused. Who cared if the family was black? There were black kids in church and school. I had even had a black teacher, Mrs. Beasley, in third grade. My big sister told me that there were blacks in the junior high school I was to attend in another year, and we saw them at the high school all the time. So who cared if they moved in two doors down? Toni whispered that she had seen two girls' bicycles come out of the truck, so there were girls in the family! And a piano!

The afternoon wore on and got warmer, the moving truck was finally empty, and the men sat on the front porch with ice water. Most of our parents had returned to our houses, so Toni's mom and we kids first saw the Perkins family drive up the street. Walking home, I passed the new white Buick LeSabre in front of the house. Twin girls about my age were getting out of the back seat. I stopped. "Hi. I'm Patsy. I live right down there." I pointed to my house. I held my hand out, just as Dad did when he met someone.

Mrs. Perkins came around the front of the car, saying, "This is Sheila and Sherry"—she shook my hand—"and this is Debra." She and Debra had the same height and beautiful smile. She pointed to the porch: "And up there is my husband, Kevin; my son, Randy; and my brother, Henry. Good to meet you, Patsy." She reached for a box in the back seat.

I thanked her, explained I was on my way home, and said goodbye. Then I remembered, "What church do you go to?" I asked the twins.

“Christ the King,” Sheila (or Sherry) answered.

“Us, too. See you tomorrow,” I smiled and skipped home. I had lots to think about. There was a black family on the street, and even nice Mrs. Rupertino seemed upset. There were twin girls with a big sister! We went to the same church! I was the first on the street to meet them! I would be able to tell the other kids something after dinner!

It was beginning to drizzle and I could hear thunder over the lake as I walked in the house. My parents’ conversation stopped as soon as I came in the door. I figured something was happening with my sister, who was sixteen and getting in trouble a lot. I was about to get a glimmer of that trouble for myself.

Mom and Dad were sitting on opposite corners of the red sofa.

“Sit down,” my father commanded, “and don’t say anything.” I sat on the stair landing that I had just mopped that morning. I began a fast replay of my day, wondering what I had done to deserve this talk. I almost missed it.

“...and we don’t want to see you talking to those colored kids.” What? I’d already talked to them! Why not? They were kids! “...bad enough they’re living on the street now without one of our kids being called a n-----r-lover,” I had never heard my dad use that word before. Shoot, he’d socked my big brother across the face when he used it! “...there’s just going to be trouble around here and you’re gonna stay out of it and stay away from them, do you understand me?”

When Dad asked that question, there was only one response: “Yes, sir.”

“Now go set the table for dinner.”

“Yes, sir.” I crossed the landing into the kitchen and got the dishes out, furiously thinking, why? None of it made sense. I had always been told to respect everyone, to be friendly to people. Mrs. Beasley was my favorite teacher, and she was black. The priests told us we needed to donate to starving kids in Africa, why couldn’t I be nice to the ones who lived on my

street? I went through dinner and cleaning up with my family in body but far away in my mind, questioning and arguing. Did other people think the same as my parents? We'd just gotten a black mayor in Cleveland; wasn't that supposed to mean we weren't prejudiced like all the people I saw shouting at marching blacks on TV? What about all this "love your brother" stuff that we heard in church? Why did Dad save the Jews in the war and tell me to stay away from the blacks in our neighborhood?

However, the rules demanded that I not question my parents. They had spoken, and I had to do what they told me. They did not have to explain it. I was just a child. That evening, I sat on the porch railing, watching the thunderstorm that seemed to last all night as I raged along with it about something that made no sense to me.

The next day we went to early Mass. As we returned home, I saw the Perkins family leaving for the ten-thirty, our usual time. Through the rest of the summer, I would see Sherry and Sheila riding bikes with each other or playing on their porch alone. Another family up the street moved out and another black family moved in. When school began, the twins, wearing the blue and grey uniforms of the parochial school, walked by themselves. Mom and Dad kept me in the public school, but with new rules: I was to come right home after I got out. The school was on the next street and they could hear the dismissal bell, so I had five minutes. Several other kids on the street had the same restriction. For the first time, we weren't allowed to go outside and wander; we had to tell our parents where we were going. Phone calls were made to check on us. The Perkins unwittingly stole our parents' ability to trust us in the world outside.

I learned that many of my friends had similar conversations with their parents that night. Many families were talking about moving, and a few had already gone. It was only this fact that made me talk back to my mother one night, as she complained to my father about the black families moving in:

"Mom, if the whites didn't move out, black people wouldn't be *able* to move in," I said angrily.

"Go to your room!" my father shouted.

The subject never came up again in that house, although we continued to live there until my high school graduation. I know that summer day in July had a profound effect on me. As the neighborhood changed around us, I was sent to a strict Catholic middle school—outside our parish. I'll never understand why my parents sent me back to the local high school after that; it was one more thing that was simply not discussed. I became one more Sixties rebel who could not wait to leave home, and I never completely trusted my parents, their rules, or the institutions that supported them again. I wonder today if people my age marched and yelled about race, war and other social issues in the sixties and seventies because we couldn't talk about them at home; we were afraid to break the rules of silence.

